

Weekly Column for October 21, 2004

Last Friday we received notice that three buildings in North Central Troy were in danger of collapsing after years and years of neglect by the owner.

The three row houses, located on Sixth Avenue near Ingalls Avenue, looked perfectly fine from the front, almost as if a raindrop had not hit them in several decades. But from the back of the building, you could see the shells the structures actually were. There were no windows left in the back, and the inside had been stripped of all historic value.

Our city engineer recently toured the building and stepped through the floor at one point. That is just one of the reasons the buildings were torn down.

The safety of the residents in those neighborhoods was the biggest concern. In recent weeks there were reports of children getting into the back of these buildings. It was a disaster waiting to happen. During my first few months in office, those buildings had been on the receiving end of complaints from businesses and residents in the area. The owner was told to fix it up, and he did not. This building was so unsafe that we would not even be able to permit it to be stabilized out of fears of safety.

We had to act and take down this hazard before it hurt someone. The gratitude from people that night was, as always, wonderful to see and hear. The neighborhood looks better, is safer, and in the future will be much easier to develop. It was important that it get done in a timely fashion. No studies, no consultants needed.

Then I read this week a local columnist who chastised the demolition as tearing down a piece of history. The only thing historical about that building was it was set to take a place in the history of Troy when it fell without our help. The building inside was stripped. The back wall was falling down. There was an enormous hole in the roof. The history of our City is wonderful, but to say a building ready to crumble should be saved, especially when it presents a danger to the residents, is brash and irresponsible.

The message I want to get out there is that we are building up in Troy. Yes, we need to rid ourselves of buildings ready to fall, buildings no one has put any money or interest in, and buildings that could hurt someone. Removing derelict structures helps improve the image of the City.

And then we will build up. Just this week I was at a Commission on Economic Opportunity groundbreaking to announce a new initiative that will allow CEO's Youthbuild to program to build a new house in Lansingburgh on a vacant lot. That is wonderful news and I look forward to seeing it succeed.

Yes, we are knocking down certain structures that are unable to be saved. But we know that the key is build back up in those places.

See you next week.